

Subject: Beginning of coinage in 8th century B.C.

Read, Burton L.
[1192 Ocean Ave]

1936

1192 Ocean Avenue,
Brooklyn, N.Y.
February 19, 1936.

American Numismatic Society,
Broadway & 155th Street,
New York.

Gentlemen:

I recently visited your collections and library in connection with my monetary studies, and greatly appreciate the courtesies shown me.

The immediate occasion of my writing is the following which I note in the World Almanac (1936, p. 341): "Recent excavations have shown that the origin of coinage goes back thousands of years!"

I should take it that this is supposed to suggest a longer period than the approximately 2600 years back to King Gyges and heirs; but while I had thought it possible that something earlier might have been discovered, my inquiries such as I have been able to make thus far have revealed nothing tangible other than a reference to Chinese metal cubes, and beads or bullets of metal in use among the Jews; perhaps elsewhere. Rings do not seem to be generally regarded as coins.

My work does not require a detailed examining of such matters, but I should like to make my general statements as accurate as possible, so if you can find it convenient to give me some indication of whatever discoveries may have come to your notice, I shall be very much indebted.

I noticed in the library, numerous specimens of what appeared to be porcelain coins, but did not have opportunity to inquire about them. I should be glad to know, in a general way, in what countries they were best-known, and whether they possessed any economic value - for decoration, etc., apart from use as money. Also, somewhere I have seen a reference to glass coins; but also, it seems to me, a denial. I should like to include a question upon that subject.

Assuring you that all assistance you give me will be duly appreciated, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

Burton L. Read.
Burton L. Read.

February 21, 1936.

Mr. Burton L. Read
1192 Ocean Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

The status of the beginning of coinage has not changed through any excavations that have taken place in recent years. All we can say is that to the best of our knowledge and belief actual coinage began in the eighth century B. C. Unstamped, cubes, lumps of metals and rings are not coins. Such use of metal extended back into the far distant past. The porcelain coins with one or two isolated exceptions are the product of Siam. They were really private tokens and not governmental pieces. Glass tokens were made both in Siam and China but are rather rare. What one sees mentioned at times are the Byzantine and Arabic glass weights which range from very small to several pounds in weight. None of these are coins in any sense of the word.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator

1192 Ocean Avenue,
Brooklyn, N.Y.
February 29, 1936.

Mr. Howland Wood, Curator,
The American Numismatic Society,
Broadway at 155th Street, New York.

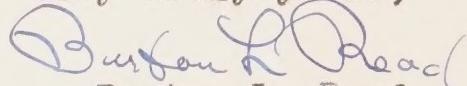
Dear Mr. Wood:

I wish to thank you for your valued letter of February 21.

It is agreed, of course, that metallic forms without stamping are not coins. The manner in which Chinese cubes were mentioned in something that I had read seemed to suggest that they were, to some extent, stamped. But I gather that such was not the case, at least in any material way.

With much appreciation, I am,

Very truly yours,


Burton L. Read.
Burton L. Read.